



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

1. Definitions

- a. Krishna: is the name of God within Hinduism and is used interchangeably with God.
- b. Collective Worship: any act of worship that is conducted collectively or as a group participating in the same activity at the same time.
- c. Worship: any activity by which children express their devotion and faith towards Krishna. This includes, but is not limited to: chanting Krishna's names quietly or in kirtan, arati, abhisheka, drama, prayer, dance and drama.
- d. Deity: the form of the Lord, which is worshipped (as distinguished from an 'idol') – see **Appendix**.

2. Purposes and Provision

- a. Positive and uplifting experiences of worship based upon the Chaitanya-Vaishnava tradition.
- b. The singing of the names of the divine, with special but not exclusive focus on Krishna.
- c. Opportunities for genuine self-discovery and spiritual exploration.
- d. Effective pastoral care that supports each students' personal, emotional and spiritual journey.
- e. Recognition that all of the world's great spiritual traditions represent the divinity in their distinctive ways.

3. Outcomes

- a. Learn practices and techniques of engaging with and approaching the spiritual.
- b. Experience, as relevant to them, a loving, spontaneous and reciprocal relationship with Krishna.
- c. Be able to reflect upon and apply their experience, knowledge and understanding of Collective Worship to their daily lives and spiritual growth.
- d. Take up opportunities to explore their own faith and spiritual journey and develop into creative, creative and enquiring thinkers who are well-prepared to make up their own minds on issues of faith and belonging.
- e. Enthusiastically participate in the different forms of worship.
- f. Can confidently consider complex spiritual and moral issues in a probing and dialogic manner, with constructive critique to promote honest and empathetic dialogue.
- g. Develop a broad-minded perspective by acknowledging the key roles of free choice, fidelity to tradition and exemplary role models.
- h. Evidence a deep awareness of an essential spiritual identity that unites all living beings, transcending all designations related to age, race, gender, species, faith affiliation and ability.



- i. Support and celebrate the Avanti ethos, including the 6 values, which will develop a tangible school-wide community spirit and positive relationships.
- j. Through Collective Worship pupils are inspired to make positive changes to themselves and the world around them.

4. Assessment

The assessment of Collective Worship within schools should support our ethos by promoting individual and autonomous thought, personal growth and values, as well as assisting the individual to recognize and develop a natural sense of spirituality, leading to devotion to Krishna.

There might be concern that any attempt to assess the value or effect of collective worship risks becoming judgmental or intrusive. We wish to avoid any system that might encourage labelling or stereotyping.

Collective assessment of a class and assessment of the Collective Worship provision should be encouraged as an approach.

At a minimum, assessment and evidence of outcomes should include:

- a. S48 inspection.
- b. Quality of provision (i.e. quality of staff delivery, kirtan, stories, thoughtful conversations etc.).
- c. Class Collective Worship Portfolio. Comprised of videos, photos, notes and observations.
- d. Collective Worship Journals. Individual reflections written by children. The diary should be used as a means to gauge the student's level of thought and contemplation. Such observations are about the quality of reflection and not accuracy or correctness. For Reception and part of Year 1, the class teacher will need to write this based upon conversations with each child. This can be increasingly online/multimedia for older students.
- e. Extracts and examples of debates, dilemmas and case studies with main arguments and thoughts.
- f. Pupil understanding of reflection on the daily and occasional prayers/songs.
- g. 'Wow' work examples.
- h. Observations by Collective Worship Lead.
- i. Examples of sharing Collective Worship with other schools.
- j. Comments book for parents and visitors on Collective Worship.
- k. Quality of classroom shrine area and displays.
- l. Record of pupil attitude towards Collective Worship, which is included in end of year report.
- m. Pupils' own assessment of their own class's happiness, behaviour, wellbeing, atmosphere and progress.
- n. Collective class assessments of cooperation skills, participation and behaviour.

4. Expectations of Staff and Training *(to be shared at or prior to interview)*



- a. Each school must have an identified lead for Collective Worship. This person might well be the same as the PRE lead. The Collective Worship lead will be responsible for all aspects of Collective Worship, including the quality of provision across all classes.
- b. All staff should attend Collective Worship and be given the opportunity to participate. However, if they do not wish to actively participate, they should be allowed to respectfully and attentively observe. In all circumstances, their behaviour should be positive and an example for students.
- c. All staff should maintain a private journal for their own spiritual development, modelling this activity at the same time as when students are writing in their Collective Worship journal.
- d. There will be separate staff induction for new staff and for existing staff. This will be three 1-hour sessions in the first term, two 1-hour sessions in the second term and two 1-hour sessions in the summer term.
- e. Each staff meeting should begin with a brief spiritual reflection. This can be led by the Principal or PRE lead.
- f. Each school must identify an appropriately accredited school chaplain and make their contact details and availability known to all staff.
- g. Either the Principal, PRE lead or other designated staff member should be identified to all staff as the 'go to' person for questions on faith, Religious Studies and Collective Worship.
- h. Training for all PRE Leads should take place every half-term. This will provide a platform for leads to share practice and disseminate good practice across all schools.
- i. All SLT members have an important role in modelling for pupils a good understanding of the school's faith ethos, engagement with Collective Worship and enthusiasm for driving the ethos forward.

5. Format of Collective Worship and Daily Prayers

Collective worship should be 20 minutes per day. This does not include any time dedicated to non-faith assembly matters. This can be whole school, by KS or individual class groupings. This will depend on individual school circumstances.

The daily prayers which will be recited are:

- a. Govindam prayers (as part of morning worship)
- b. Pranam Mantras (as part of morning worship)



- c. Hare Krsna maha mantra (as part of morning worship)
- d. Narasimhadev prayers (as part of morning worship)
- e. Avanti Prayers (at three points during the day – start of day, lunch, end of day)

Translations for the above do not have to be read daily but the meanings of the above prayers must be discussed in class at least once a fortnight so that correct pronunciation and understanding can be checked. Children can share different understandings of the translations and ways to connect and remember their meaning.

6. Observation of Festivals

Festivals should be celebrated on the actual day of the religious festival unless these days fall outside of term-time, since these days we know well in advance. There are different levels of observation for the different festivals.

Level 1: Govardhan-puja, Gaura Purnima and Ratha Yatra.

There should be 3 drop-down days throughout the year, one day per term. The usual curriculum will be either themed on these festivals or suspended in order to engage in festival activities.

Level 2: Janmashtami, Radhashtami, Srila Prabhupada's birthday, Christmas (Christian), Lord Nityananda's birthday, Siva Ratri, Ramnavami, Easter (Christian) and Lord Nrsimhadeva's birthday.

These 9 festivals per year will be celebrated through an extended Collective Worship of 40 minutes, incorporating engaging activities such as drama and song. These will typically be whole school or KS gatherings and hosted in the temple area if possible. These festivals will be supported by in-class activities.

Level 3: Ekadashi, Appearance/Disappearance days of the 6 Goswamis and the principal acharyas, Passover (Jewish) and Eid (Muslim).

These festivals will be celebrated through a slightly extended Collective Worship to be able to reference something about the festival focus.

Level 4: All other religious days e.g. Vasant Pancami.

Mentioned immediately before or after Collective Worship and/or assembly.

A comprehensive curriculum for each festival, differentiated by KS or year group, will be developed for implementation. Differentiation will be possible through different festive activities and learning/meaning of festival specific songs and prayers.



It is important that schools consider creative, fun and engaging ways to celebrate the festivals, for example:

Kirtan

Drama

Dramatised textual readings

Dance

Abhisheka

Special altar decorations

Cooking

Specific bhajans/songs

Yajnas

Festival specific (e.g. cart procession for Ratha-yatra)

The parents and the wider community can be invited in to participate in different festivals if the school wishes.

7. British Values

Assemblies will reference Collective Worship links to ensure there are recorded links to British Values. This will be documented as evidence. All schools will provide opportunities for those of different faiths and beliefs to contribute and share, thus developing respect and appreciation of others.



Appendix: Avanti Schools Deity Standards

The worship of deities in all Avanti schools is to inspire a personal relationship with Krishna. The shrine offers a sacred space for the school community to gather for prayer, kirtan, and worship. Coming before the deity of Krishna and offering service to Him is an important limb of spiritual and devotional life. In order to facilitate this and ensure access to the shrine is open and inclusive as well as maintaining the sanctity of this space as taught by Lord Chaitanya, the following standards are to be followed.

Anyone entering the altar area for the purpose of offering arati to the school deities should adhere to the following standards to maintain the sanctity of deity worship within all Avanti schools.

1. Involvement with the Main Shrine

There are 3 broad categories of involvement with the main shrine:

- A. Shrine access (e.g. opening the curtains) and assistance (e.g. helping assemble arati tray before worship)
- B. Shrine worship (act of offering arati, offering food or waking the deities and putting them to rest)
- C. Deity dressing (once a week dressing of the deities)

For anyone who is involved in any of the above activities:

- Should have showered and not evacuated since showering.
- Archaman should be performed as soon as one enters the altar area.
- Must have been inducted and trained into the activity they are to perform.

In **addition** to the above, those who are performing arati or waking the deities:

- Clothes should be washed and fresh.
- Should have taken at least first initiation within ISKCON, unless they are: a pupil of the school and have been chosen by the school (at the school's discretion) to perform worship; the Head Teacher; or another member of staff who is following initiation standards (chanting 16 rounds daily and following the regulative principles) but may not be formally initiated.

In **addition** to the above, those who are dressing the deity once a week (typically on a group of volunteers on the weekend):

- Should not have eaten or drunk anything except water, since showering, before dressing the deity.
- Should have taken at least first initiation within ISKCON.

2. If pupils are chosen by the school to be involved in Main Shrine worship:

- They must be supervised by an adult at all times and supervising adult must be trained to do the activity that the child will perform.



- Should shower on the morning of performing the worship.
- Should be dressed in washed and fresh school uniform (or traditional dress if the child and school wishes).
- Must have completed some training on deity worship, including how to offer the arati, the different mantras needed for the worship, cleanliness and personal hygiene requirements prior to going on the altar.
- Both girls and boys should be encouraged to participate.
- Each article can be offered 7 times around each deity (and Srila Prabhupada) to simplify worship for the children.
- If the child wishes, they can help prepare the fruit offering (under supervision of an adult priest) and offer it, to the Lord, on the altar.
- If the child wishes, they can also help to prepare the arati tray prior to the beginning of the ceremony on their day of worship. If the child does not wish to, then the fruit offering and arati tray should be prepared by the supervising adult.
- To ensure an appropriate level of gravity, only children from year 5 and above should be allowed.

3. Cleaning the Main Shrine area:

Daily:

- Wiping of altar tables.
- Cleaning of any paraphernalia used.
- Removing all fresh flowers from the shrine at the end of each day.
- Cleaning any additional areas that may need attention as and when necessary.
- Sweeping and mopping the floor.

Weekly (typically by those dressing the deity):

- Cleaning the shrine thoroughly including areas that may not have been cleaned during the week.

Monthly (typically by those dressing the deity):

- Wiping the domes of the shrine.
- Plus weekly and daily items and areas.

4. Minimum standards for the Main Shrine when the school is open:

- A detailed daily schedule should be in place for taking care of the deities. This should be agreed with the Trust and should include details of arati formats, mantras being used, worship protocols etc., none of which should contradict what is in this document.
- There should be a daily offering of arati at a time agreed with the school.
- There should be a daily offering of food.
- The deities should be woken and put to rest on a daily basis according to an agreed schedule and format.



- If the deities are woken on any day when the school may be closed, arati and a food offering must also take place.
- The above can be exceeded (e.g. two offerings of food per day) but a new minimum standard should not be set.

5. Important additional points:

- There should be a school-appointed person who has overall responsibility for the deities and shrine care. This person may often be a member of the kitchen team. This person will also report to the Trust's lead for deity and shrine standards.
- The shrine should be open as much of the school day as possible. This includes during lunch hours.
- There are no strict times for when the shrine has to be open or closed.
- The shrine hall can be decorated by the work of the children.
- Outstanding pieces of work from students can be used to decorate the area around the shrine as a reward for their efforts.
- Restrictions for ladies during their monthly menstrual cycle pertains to shrine access, shrine worship and deity dressing. It does *not* pertain to *darshan* (viewing the deities).
- Schools can raise donations to help towards the costs for maintaining the deities. Each school will need to decide if they will use school funds towards shrine expenses.

6. Classroom deities and small classroom shrines:

- The shrine should have the deities of Gaura-Nitai (as supplied by the Trust) and a small photo of Srila Prabhupada.
- Other photos can, but do not have to include other Vishnu avatars (Rama, Narasimha etc.) and other Gaudiya-Vaishnava acaryas. No other photos or deities should be placed inside the shrine.
- Children to be encouraged to offer worship and articles such as flowers, fan and ringing the bell every morning before lessons begin, accompanied by singing. Care must obviously be taken if offering items such as incense.
- All classes should have a 5-10 minute singing of Hare Krishna with instruments or just hand cymbals at some time during the day, outside of collective worship.
- Children are allowed to dress the deity with care and supervision.
- The altar can be decorated by the work of the children to encourage awareness of Lord Krishna in their classrooms and encourage interaction with the deities.
- If the deities are moved from the altar this must be done with due reverence and care and under adult supervision.
- There are no other rules around conditions for the worship which takes place at the classroom shrine.